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Security Council

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Letter dated 16 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from Mr. Najib Ghadbian, Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition, dated 16 April 2014 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Lana **Nusseibeh**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, it is my grave responsibility to draw to your attention the urgent need for an immediate investigation into the recent use of chemical agents by Syrian regime forces in the Syrian town of Kafr Zita.

On Friday, 11 April 2014, Syrian regime aerial forces bombarded the opposition-held town of Kafr Zita with explosive barrels loaded with chemical and toxic gases. Witnesses present at the site have stated that the explosions produced thick yellow-coloured smoke and strong odors, with victims displaying symptoms ranging from suffocation and choking to vomiting, foaming at the mouth and, in several cases, hypertension.

It is highly likely that the chemical agent responsible for causing such suffering was chlorine gas. This dual-use chemical is lethal when deployed for military purposes. Its usage as a chemical weapon constitutes a war crime, as defined by the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, signed in Geneva on 17 June 1925, and to which Syria acceded on 22 November 1968. Moreover, the use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon of war represents a direct violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), in which the Security Council decided that the Syrian regime "shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons".

Of the 200 victims of the 11 April 2014 attacks in Kafr Zita, a majority were innocent civilians. The Syrian regime cannot be permitted to deploy this lethal agent of war with impunity. Failure to act today will only condemn more civilians to future chemical weapons attacks by the Syrian regime. It is therefore incumbent upon the Security Council to mandate without delay an independent investigation into the Kafr Zita attacks. This investigation should be charged with verifying the circumstances of the 11 April 2014 tragedy and be empowered to determine the party responsible for ordering these illegal aerial attacks.

As per the Syrian Coalition's letter to members of the Council on 11 April 2014 (S/2014/274), it remains imperative that independent inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission visit the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre charged with producing Syria's chlorine gas. Such a visit would allow Joint Mission investigators to determine with greater accuracy the full extent of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons arsenal and the status of its alleged compliance with Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

The Syrian Coalition and its partner, the Free Syrian Army, remain committed to cooperating fully with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission, and we stand ready to facilitate an independent investigation by United Nations monitors in the town of Kafr Zita. Should the Syrian regime be found to have deployed chemical weapons against innocent civilians in the Syrian town of Kafr Zita, we trust that the Security Council will impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as required by Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition
to the United Nations